

reduction of debt. It is bipartisan, it is honest, it achieves real debt reduction, and it does it in the fairest possible way. It puts everything on the table—everything. There are no sacred cows. Everything is on the table. It means it goes beyond spending cuts to the entitlement programs, which makes those of us on the Democratic side particularly nervous. But it also goes to revenue—new revenue—to reduce the deficit, which makes those on the other side of the aisle nervous. But what we should be nervous about is a continuing deficit and a weakening economy and a debt left to our children.

I believe this proposal that is before us now—this agreement of the leaders—should be adopted in a timely fashion. I hope we can move to it today. We are working out with the Republicans a schedule when these matters will be considered. There will be those on the right and the left who will be critical, and I can understand their thinking. It doesn't serve either side particularly well. But it is a compromise and a consensus.

I think of all the people who contacted my office from Illinois and beyond during the last several weeks, begging us to do something, to not let this economy fail, to work together and compromise and find a way to resolve our differences. I think this is a reasonable attempt to do that. I will support it, with some misgivings. But I believe it gives us the way to get through this crisis and to move to a better place where we deal with this deficit and debt in a responsible, bipartisan manner, asking for shared sacrifice from all those across America who can make a sacrifice. That is the nature of our Nation. It is the nature of our history, where time and again we have rallied as a nation to face even more daunting challenges in the past.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 12:30 p.m.

Thereupon, at 11:01 a.m., the Senate recessed until 12:30 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. WHITEHOUSE).

ESTABLISHING THE COMMISSION ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT PROCESSING DELAYS—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2

o'clock shall be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Who yields time? If no one yields time, the time will be charged equally between the parties.

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum and ask that the time under the quorum call be equally divided between both sides.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I have come to the floor and talked many times of my constituents back home in Alaska and the importance of ensuring we have a balanced approach in how we deal with this incredible debt crisis we are in and how we manage to create some certainty not only for today but in the years to come. We want to make sure we not only create certainty but we also do what we can to protect working families, honor our commitment to seniors and veterans, and let our small businesses know that we stand behind them, we want them to be successful, and we want to create some certainty out there so they can expand their operations and opportunity.

I am sitting here in Washington, DC, and it is whatever temperature it is outside right now—maybe 100 degrees, with 80 or 90 percent humidity—and sometimes I think we could have gotten this done quicker if we had just turned off the air-conditioning. We probably could have gotten things done quicker, with better results. But we are where we are. We are in the last 24 hours or so before we have to make a decision as to what to do with the proposals, the solutions that have been presented.

I am here, but I wish I were home, to be frank with you. This last weekend, my son was celebrating his ninth birthday, and as a parent every birthday is huge and makes a difference. I know the Presiding Officer knows that very well. So while I am here, they were enjoying life, and it made me think about a lot of things.

I wanted to put this poster up because I think it is a great poster. I got this text during a committee meeting. This is my son, who just turned 9, with a real fish. For those who can't see it, it is the same height as he is. He caught this fish with his mother a few days ago. It is a 40-pounder king salmon. It is what we call a real fish. We consider this small in comparison to some others we catch.

But when I got this text—and that is what is so great about technology: He

sends me little notes and comments during meetings and wants to make sure I am connected to what he is doing back home. But this debate we are having—this moment in time—to figure out where we are going is about the Jacobs and the other children of his age and those not yet born. It is about what we are going to do for them. The Presiding Officer and I have already experienced and enjoyed many years of our life, and hopefully we will enjoy many more, but really it is about Jacob and the other children.

When I go back home, I get a chance to talk with the kids. I am sure the Presiding Officer has done the same, where you go into an elementary school—I know the Presiding Officer was a teacher in Sunday preschool—you go in and have conversations with the kids, and in their own way, which is sometimes very brutally honest, they tell you all about what they think is going on. And I will give a quote here in a second of what my son said to me. He doesn't understand everything we are doing, but he understands it is an intense time here because I am not home. I am not with him. So he knows it is important, what we are doing here, as we debate this solution and what will be the next step.

Is what we have come up with a perfect solution? No. Are there some issues about which I am still concerned? Yes. But does it move us down a path to start dealing with the spending, the deficit, and the debt, creating certainty and protecting those who need protection, such as our seniors and our veterans? Yes.

This proposal produces about a \$1 trillion downpayment on our deficit and debt. It lays out a process by which we can achieve another \$1.5 trillion in debt reduction if this joint committee can come back with a proposal.

In the process of all this, we will create certainty in the marketplace. We will create certainty for that small businessperson who has been thinking about expanding their business. They can do that because the markets will respond positively.

We will create certainty for the individual who was thinking about buying a house or a car because now there will be stable rates.

For those who are putting money aside for the education of their young family, as I have been putting aside for Jacob for his college, we will know now that the markets are better and safer, the bonds we invest in are safer, and our children's future is a little more secure if we do the right thing over the next 24 hours, still knowing it is not the perfect deal.

The proposal evenly splits cutting between half in discretionary and half in Pentagon waste, ensuring we still are a secure nation and protecting our defenses but cutting what I would consider opportunities within the Pentagon to reduce.

As we sit here today, I think about Jacob's future and the futures of all